

## Message Text

PAGE 01 PHNOM 12383 01 OF 02 121554Z

41

ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

----- 100575

R 121215Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3775

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

COMUSSAG

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 PHNOM PENH 12383

EXDIS

SECSTATE PASS INFO SECDEF, CJCS, CIA

TOKYO FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CB

SUBJECT: POLITICAL UPDATE

1. SUMMARY: THREE WEEKS AFTER THE OCTOBER 21 RESHUFFLE OF THE IN TAM CABINET THE FACADE OF UNITY HAS HELD UP QUITE WELL AND UNREST IN THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP HAS AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT SUBSIDED. BUT ECONOMIC GRIEVANCE ARE PILING UP, AND THE GOVERNMENT IS BRACING FOR STUDENT AND TEACHER DEMONSTRATIONS. OUR READING OF THE CURRENT THREAT IS LESS DIRE THAN THE GOVERNMENT'S, BUT THERE ARE CLEARLY IMPORTANT DANGERS AHEAD THIS WINTER. END SUMMARY

2. WITH ALL FACTIONS CONSCIOUS OF THE HEAT FROM NEW YORK, THE POLITICIANS ARE WORKING TOGETHER RATHER BETTER THAN USUAL. RESPONDING TO OUR URGINGS, LON NOL HAS STRUCTURED THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL IN A MORE BUSINESSLIKE MANNER, EMPLOYING A PERMANENT SECRETARY (THE ABLE NEANG CHIN HAN), OPERATING SECRET

PAGE 02 PHNOM 12383 01 OF 02 121554Z

FROM AN AGENDAN AND SCHEDULING REGULAR MEETINGS TWO TIMES A WEEK. ALL PARTICIPANTS SAY THE WORK IS GOING BETTER. THE LEADERSHIP HAS ALSO MADE A PUBLIC SHOW OF UNITY WITH LON NOL, IN TAM, THE HEADS OF THE SOCIO-

REPUBLICAN AND REPUBLICAN PARTIES, AND FANK CINC MAJGEN SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ APPEARING TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MEMORY IN A NOVEMBER 7 TRIP TO KOMPONG CHAM. IN TAM REMINDS EVERYBODY PERIODICALLY THAT HE WILL WITHDRAW AS PRIME MINISTER AFTER THE KHMER QUESTION IN THE UN IS SETTLED; MEANWHILE HIS RELATIONS WITH LON NOL APPEAR TO HAVE IMPROVED, AND HE SEEMS INTENT ON NOT ROCKING THE BOAT.

3. BEHIND THE SCENES, OF COURSE, THE USUAL POLITICAL MANEUVERS AND COUNTERMANEUVERS CONTINUE, BUT AT A RELATIVELY LOW PITCH. IN TAM AND PARTY LEADERS SOCIO-REPUBLICAN HANG THUN HAK AND REPUBLICAN OP KIM ANG ARE FINDING THAT IT IS GOING TO BE DIFFICULT TO APPLY THE PRIVATE DEAL THEY STRUCK OCTOBER 21 DURING CABINET NEGOTIATIONS (A) NOT TO PUT TO THE PARLIAMENT LAWS OTHER THAN THOSE CONCERNING CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES AND (B) TO ASK LON NOL TO REQUEST A SUSPENSION OF VARIOUS LEGISLATIVE ARTICLES OF THE CONSTITUTION. DIVERGENCES OVER THIS QUESTION CAUSED A MINOR FLARE-UP IN THE CABINET NOVEMBER 9. AT THE SAME TIME THE MAJORITY SOCIO-REPUBLICAN PARTY APPEARS TO BE POLARIZING INTO TWO WINGS, ONE LED BY THE INCUMBENT SECRETARY GENERAL HANG THUN HAK, WHO IS CONSTANTLY HOPING FOR AN OPENING TO THE LEFT, THE OTHER REPRESENTED BY DEPUTY THACH TOAN, AN AMBITIOUS HARDLINER PROMOTING THE IDEA OF A STRONG ANTI-COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT.

4. AFTER A BRIEF FLARE-UP FOLLOWING THE CABINET RESHUFFLE, TURBULENCE IN THE TOP MILITARY APPEARS TO HAVE SUBSIDED SOMEWHAT. MANEUVERING BETWEEN LON NOL AND SOSTHENE HAS LEFT BOTH PLAYERS IN ABOUT THE SAME RELATIONSHIP TO EACH OTHER. SO FAR LON NOL HAS BEEN CONTENT TO REMIND SOSTHENE WHO'S BOSS BY NAMING HIS CRONY DEFENSE MINISTER MAJGEN THAPPANA NGINN AS CHAIRMAN OF THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE OF THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL OF NATIONAL DEFENSE, OF WHICH SOSTHENE IS  
SECRET

PAGE 03 PHNOM 12383 01 OF 02 121554Z

ONLY A MEMBER. THEORETICALLY THIS MOVE PUTS SOSTHENE UNDER THAPPANA'S AUTHORITY; IN POINT OF FACT RELATIONSHIPS CONTINUE AS THEY WERE BEFORE. (THE FORMER CHAIRMAN WAS IN TAM, WHO HAD ONCE HOPED BUT LONG SINCE RENOUNCED TO USE THE COMMITTEE TO DOMINATE SOSTHENE. SUBSTITUTION OF THAPPANA WAS SOLD TO IN TAM AS A SYMBOLIC DOWNGRADING OF SOSTHENE, AND APPEARS TO HAVE CAUSED NO HEARTBURN.) THE RECENT RESHUFFLE OF THE GENERAL STAFF LEAVES A LON NOL PROTEGE (MAJGEN MAO SUM KHEM, WHO ALSO GETS ON WELL WITH SOSTHENE) IN THE KEY J-3 JOB, AND THE BALANCE BETWEEN THE VARIOUS CLIQUES IS ABOUT AS BEFORE. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT SOSTHENE AND LON NOL WORKED CLOSELY ON THE CHANGES,

AND APPEAR TO HAVE REACHED A TEMPORARY TRUCE.

NOTE BY OC/T: PHNOM PENH 12383 NOT PASSED SECDEF,CJCS,CIA,

SECRET

PAGE 01 PHNOM 12383 02 OF 02 121547Z

41

ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

----- 100517

R 121215Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3776

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

COMUSSAG

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 PHNOM PENH 12383

EXDIS

5. THE MAIN CURRENT POLITICAL PROBLEMS ARE RICE AND HYPERINFLATION. WITH THE THAI EXAMPLE BEFORE THEM, THE STUDENTS RETURNING TO UNIVERSITY CLASSES, PRICES RISING SEVERAL PERCENT A WEEK, AND THE RICE CRISIS ONLY JUST BEGINNING TO EASE, ALL LEADERS ARE PREDICTING ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATIONS AT AN EARLY DATE. THIS PAST WEEK THERE HAS BEEN A GOOD DEAL OF ACTIVITY BY THE GOVERNMENT; MUCH OF IT INCOHERENT, TO FORESTALL SUCH DEMONSTRATIONS. IN TAM GOT TOGETHER A GROUP OF STUDENTS AND SUGGESTED THAT THEY TAKE OVER THE DISTRIBUTION OF RICE, ONLY TO BACK OFF WHEN THE STUDENTS DEMANDED TO SET UP A COURT TO JUDGE CORRUPT LOCAL OFFICIALS. LON NOL TRIED TO SWITCH ALL RICE DISTRIBUTION INTO THE HANDS OF LOCAL GENERAL MOBILIZATION OFFICIALS (WHO ACT IN EFFECT AS HIS WARD ORGANIZATION IN PHNOM PENH), AND HAD TO BE THWARTED BY US. MORE TO THE POINT, ARMY UNITS HAVE BEEN WARNED (A) TO AVOID CONFRONTATIONS, (B) TO TIGHTEN DISCIPLINE AND GET THEIR MEN OFF THE STREETS, AND (C) TO BE READY OF NECESSARY TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SECURITY AGAINST STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS. OUR SOUNDINGS INCIDATE SIGNIFICANT AGITATION IN SOME STUDENT/TEACHER QUARTERS BUT SO FAR THE INCIDENT AND/OR LEADERSHIP REQUIRED TO SET OFF SERIOUS TROUBLE HAS BEEN

SECRET

PAGE 02 PHNOM 12383 02 OF 02 121547Z

LACKING. IN THIS REGARD WE NOTE ALSO THAT THE GKR  
MANAGED TO PULL THROUGH A MONTH OF SHARP RICE SHORTAGE  
WITH ONLY TWO RICE INCIDENTS OF ANY SCOPE.

6. FOR THE FUTURE THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT ECONOMIC  
UNREST WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY DANGEROUS. PRICES OF  
LOCALLY PRODUCED GOODS ARE RISING AT AN ANNUAL RATE OF 250  
PERCENT AS A CONSEQUENCE OF TERRITORIAL LOSSES BY THE  
GKR AND THE SHARP INCREASE IN THE REFUGEE POPULATION.  
THE SHORTAGE OF LOCALLY PRODUCED GOODS IS OF COURSE A  
PROBLEM THAT FOREIGN AID CAN MITIGATE ONLY TO A MINOR  
DEGREE, AND THERE WILL BE NO RELIEF FOR THE CURRENT  
EXTRAORDINARY PRICE INCREASES UNTIL A MAJOR RESETTLEMENT  
EFFORT GETS UNDERWAY AND UNTIL THE GKR CAN BEGIN  
EXPANDING THE AGRICULTURAL LAND UNDER ITS CONTROL.  
WE WILL BE ADDRESSING THIS PROBLEM IN SEPARATE  
MESSAGES.

7. IF SOCIAL UNREST DOES BREAK OUT, THE CURRENT  
RELATIVE DETENTE AMONG THE POLITICANS AND FANK  
SENIORS IS LIKELY TO BE AN EARLY CASUALTY.

8. IT IS ALSO CLEAR THAT ONE OF THE PRICES THE REPUBLIC  
PAYS FOR A COALITION GOVERNMENT IS SUBSTANTIAL INABILITY  
TO ACT PURPOSEFULLY AGAINST THE SERIOUS PROBLEMS IT  
FACES: WHAT TO DO WITH RALLIERS, HOW TO RECEIVE AND  
RESETTLE REFUGEES, HOW TO RAISE A MODICUM OF TAXES, AND  
SO FORTH. THE QUESTION OF THE SHAPE OF THE GOVERNMENT  
WILL BE POSED AGAIN IN DECEMBER, WHEN NO DOUBT IN TAM  
WILL MAKE GOOD HIS LONG THREATENED RESIGNATION. IT IS  
PROBABLE THAT HOWEVER BRAVELY IT MAY TALK, OR HOWEVER  
MUCH IT AGITATES, NO SINGLE FACTION IN THE FUTURE AS  
IN THE PAST WILL HAVE THE STRENGTH TO DOMINATE THE  
KHMER GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY AND IMPOSE ON THEM A  
FORCEFUL AND COHERENT PLAN OF ACTION. THE GKR WILL  
THEN HAVE AGAIN TO FALL BACK ON A COALITION OF CAREFULLY  
ADJUSTED CHECKS AND BALANCES, AND RELY ON OUTSIDE  
AGENCIES FOR THE IMPETUS IN SOLVING ITS PROBLEMS.  
ENDERS

NOTE BY OC/T: PNMOM PENH 12383 NOT PASSED SECDEF,CJCS,CIA.

SECRET

PAGE 03 PHNOM 12383 02 OF 02 121547Z

SECRET

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** Z  
**Capture Date:** 11 MAY 1999  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** FOREIGN RELATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 12 NOV 1973  
**Decaption Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** golinofr  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1973PHNOM12383  
**Document Source:** ADS  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** 11652 GDS  
**Errors:** n/a  
**Film Number:** P750020-2073  
**From:** PHNOM PENH  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1973/newtext/t19731166/abqceggf.tel  
**Line Count:** 209  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION SS  
**Original Classification:** SECRET  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** EXDIS  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 4  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
**Previous Classification:** SECRET  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** EXDIS  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** golinofr  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:** ANOMALY  
**Review Date:** 13 DEC 2001  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <14-Nov-2001 by willialc>; RELEASED <13-Dec-2001 by elyme>; APPROVED <19-Dec-2001 by golinofr>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** POLITICAL UPDATE  
**TAGS:** PINT, CB, US  
**To:** STATE INFO BANGKOK  
SAIGON  
TOKYO  
CINCPAC  
COMUSSAG  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

